

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Please replace the claims with the claims provided in the listing below wherein status, amendments, additions and cancellations are indicated.

1. (Withdrawn) A toy, comprising:

a structural configuration including a portion thereof which comprises an animal access region defined by a structural portion of the toy which the animal is relatively more likely to bite and hold with its mouth by virtue of at least one of enhanced sensory attraction or greater relative physical accessibility, than a remainder of the toy; and

said structural configuration including an other portion defining an animal restricted region, said animal restricted region being defined by another structural portion relatively less likely to be accessed by the pet during play by reason of at least one of less sensory appeal or structural inaccessibility, than said animal access region, said animal restricted region being accessible by a hand of a human user.

2. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 1, wherein said animal restricted region is created by provision of shielding structure which physically deters

an animal from accessing said animal restricted region from access by a mouth of the animal, yet allows the hand of the human user to access the animal restricted region.

3. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 2, wherein:

said animal restricted region includes at least one handle graspable by a hand of a human user, said at least one handle including a portion extending at least partially along a longitudinal handle axis;

and said shielding structure includes at least one structural portion disposed in a spaced apart radial position of said handle relative to said handle axis, said at least one structural portion being located so as to be at least partially coextensive with an axial positioning of said handle.

4. (Withdrawn) A toy which inhibits user hand contact with animal saliva deposited on a play toy during interactive play by the animal and the user, comprising:

at least one structural portion being disposed in a position readily accessible by a mouth of the animal and by which the animal can hold the toy by retaining the at least one structural portion in the mouth;

at least one grip being hand-accessible by the user; and

a shielding portion arranged to at least partially discourage animal access to said at least one grip by inhibiting access of the mouth of the animal thereto, at least a portion of said grip being disposed in an axial position along a toy axis which is disposed axially inwardly of an axially outermost portion of said shielding portion in a direction of said toy axis.

5. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 4, wherein:

said at least one structural portion includes an elongated member extending along a toy axis;

said at least one grip includes at least one handle disposed at at least one of opposed ends of said elongated member; and

said shielding portion includes shielding structure extending radially at least partially about said at least one handle.

6. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 5, wherein said shielding structure includes a generally cup-shaped shield having open ends arranged to point outward of a central region of the toy in a direction of said toy axis.

7. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 6, wherein the shield includes cutouts therein.

8. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 5, wherein said at least one handle includes two handles disposed respectively at the opposed ends of said elongated member.

9. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 4, wherein:  
said at least one structural portion includes members disposed in circumferentially spaced apart positions about a toy axis and which include portions thereof which are radially spaced apart from said toy axis.

10. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 9, wherein said members include at least three members, at least a portion of each of the members extending longitudinally co-directional with said toy axis.

11. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 10, wherein said at least a portion of said three members which extend longitudinally are spaced apart circumferentially from one another by approximately equal angular intervals.

12. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 10, wherein:

said at least one grip includes at least one handle of elongated dimension arranged along a longitudinal handle axis which is approximately aligned with the toy axis; and

said portions of said members which are radially spaced apart from said toy axis are extended outward from a center of the toy in an axial direction such that said portions extend past an axial position of an inwardmost end of the handle closest to said center, thereby at least partially shielding the handle.

13. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 12, wherein said portions of said members which are radially spaced apart from said toy axis are configured to collectively describe a generally spherical envelope.

14. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 13, wherein the toy is self-righting, such that when tossed onto a relatively horizontal support surface, the toy is free to roll as a ball yet, will generally come to rest with the handle extending horizontally.

15. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 9, wherein the toy is formed integrally.

16. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 15, wherein the toy includes a resilient material.

17. (Currently amended) A method of inhibiting user hand contact with animal saliva deposited on a play toy during interactive play by the animal and the user, comprising the steps of:

providing the toy with an animal access region readily available to ~~gripping in~~ a mouth of the animal for gripping thereby;

providing the toy with an animal restricted region which is less likely to be accessed by the mouth of the animal, said animal restricted region being hand-holdable by the user;

presenting the toy to the animal during the interactive play; and

handling the toy by holding said animal restricted region in the hand of the user following gripping of the animal access region in the mouth of the animal ~~by holding said animal restricted region in the hand of the user.~~

18. (Cancelled)

19. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 3, wherein:

a toy axis passes through said at least one handle, said at least one handle being accessible by a hand of a user at least in a direction of said toy axis; and

said structure at least partially physically shielding said animal restricted region from access by a mouth of the animal is at least partially defined by structural portions of said animal access regions arranged to at least partially surround at least an axially coextensive portion of said handle thereby forming a radial opening of a predetermined size in such a manner as to discourage access by the mouth of the animal to said handle when approached from a general direction along said toy axis based upon the predetermined size of said radial opening suitably selected to allow passage of the hand therethrough for access to said handle, but to discourage access thereof by the mouth of the animal.

20. (Withdrawn) A toy according to claim 19, wherein:

said handle is defined at least partially by an elongated member extending longitudinally codirectional with said toy axis; and

said structural portions of said animal access regions which are arranged to at least partially surround at least the coextensive portion of said handle are extended outward from a center of the toy in an axial direction past an axial position of a terminal end of said at least one handle.